

NEWS RELEASE TEMPLATE

Health and Safety in a Flood Emergency

Water damage in your home caused by floods can create serious health and safety concerns. After a flood, you must take precautions to protect your family from developing illnesses associated with contaminated water, food, and air and moisture problems.

“Homeowners who are cleaning up after flooding should not use any drinking water sources until health officials approve them; discard frozen foods that may have thawed during a power outage; and begin as soon as possible to dry out and disinfect walls. Standing water and excessive moisture can lead to the growth of bacteria, mold and insects,” said (name and title) of the (county health agency name).

(He/She) offered more advice to help keep homes and families healthy:

FOODS

- Raw foods exposed to flood waters should be avoided because of possible contamination. If raw foods must be used, clean thoroughly and rinse with chlorinated water (two teaspoons of liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water).
- Destroy the contents of crown-capped bottles and foods in glass jars. Their food-safety seals may have been broken. Destroy canned foods when swelling, rusting or serious denting is visible.
- Cook all foods thoroughly. Frozen foods that have been thawed should be discarded if not consumed immediately, or kept refrigerated at 45 degrees F. or lower.

HOUSEHOLD CLEAN-UP

- Prior to flooding, power should have been turned off in cellars. If possible, wait for ground waters to drop below floor level. Otherwise, drain or pump water from flooded cellars. Wash down the walls, floors and other areas exposed to flood waters. Keep windows and doors open for ventilation. Disinfect the washed areas by applying a solution of bleach with a broom. The solution is prepared by adding four tablespoons of bleach to five gallons of water. Allow the solution to remain on the surface for approximately 10 minutes. Rinse with cold water as soon as possible to minimize staining. You may also use a commercial disinfectant.
- Furniture: Clean and then wash metal and leather surfaces with mild soap and water and wipe dry immediately. Some upholstery may be washed on the surface with soap and water and wiped dry. Expose to open air and sunshine.
- Floor Coverings: Flush rugs and carpets with a hose and squeegee, then wash with lukewarm water containing a detergent. Rinse and dry in sun.

SAFETY

- Rubber gloves should be worn while scrubbing damaged interiors with a bleach solution.
- Don't neglect supposedly minor cuts, scratches or other injuries or sickness experienced during the emergency.

For further information, (name and title) recommends the New York State Department of Health brochure *Don't Be Left in the Dark* (#7064) which can be ordered by writing Emergency Sanitation, Box 2000, Albany, NY 12220. The information also is available on the NYSDOH web site www.nyhealth.gov.